

Ted totally changed my life! By playing him, I tapped into something in myself that I hadn't really seen before—the openness, the practical jokes, the rock-and-roll. I even started talking like him. It's like, 'Whoa, dude, totally gotta go!' He was like a best friend, you know, when you share someone's humor or even start talking like them. It's kind of weird, but it really happened.

"When the first film came out, the trades were like, 'Wow, **Bill & Ted** continues to astound the industry with its success.' Well, theatrically, it did OK, but a lot of people went, 'Yo! I definitely do *not* want to see these two clowns. They're so stupid.' Then they were like subjected to it when they turned on the tube, and as they found themselves watching, they thought it was funny and clever without being pretentious. So the original's real popularity came from cable and video.

"We definitely got a lot more money to star in the sequel—which was *totally* cool—but we didn't do it because of negotiations or contracts. There may have been some kind of clause at some point, but after DEG [the production company for **Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure**] went bankrupt, everything was null and void. It was more what we were going to do, what the story was going to be. Alex [Winter] and I told the writers, Ed Solomon and Chris Matheson, that we wanted a strong storyline and blah, blah, blah. We were really passionate about it.

"This time, Bill and Ted have grown up; they're 21. They live out of the house, and they've got the responsibilities of paying for food and rent. So they work at this joint called Pretzels & Cheese. They share an apartment, they have girlfriends, they're trying to do a band, and they're broke. They even give blood once in a while to get coin.

"Even though I was playing the same guy, I didn't want to just regurgitate the first movie. I'd be miserable and no one would like it—probably. So when Alex and I'd go out to dinner, we'd wind up in restaurant parking lots for hours doing bits. Since the comedy in the film had to be so sharp, we'd work really hard to give the words life.

"The language was so pure. It comes from an emotional place. It goes into their body and comes out, expressing how they feel. To do that, you've got to be there. You *can't* fake it.

"Sometimes, I even felt like I was

doing Shakespeare. I mean, I know the lines were silly, but it was like you had to put nuance and breath and emotion into them, or they wouldn't communicate. I think that those who liked the film responded to Bill and Ted's energy and spirit.

"To make the reaction happen, we had to be really concentrated and in that space. Compared to the original, we had a larger budget, but the time frame was more compact. We weren't indulged with takes. We really had to take charge—it was ambitious.

"It was really awesome playing Ted's robotic evil twin. I got to break plates and jump around and be totally out of my mind. There was this one line where's he with this *woman* and he says, 'Evil Ted needs some servicing. Come on, baby, I'm on the bed with a

KEANU REEVES: WITHOUT BILL THE LAST WORD A TOTALLY BOGUS TALK WITH TED

princess!' I could have grabbed her tits. I could have done all this serious shit. But who wants to do that? It's evil. So instead, I just kinda went down by her ear and whispered, 'Heh, heh, heh,' just to scare her.

"With the bad Ted, there were a lot of opportunities for some serious evil, but I just didn't do it. Why? Because it had no place. I guess that's a moral decision. Believe it or not, playing the evil Ted wasn't as much fun as playing the good one, who's a much richer character.

"As far as a sequel, who knows what's going to happen. It'd have to be an extraordinary story. The only thing I'd want to do would be a really low-budget, really black road-comedy—*Bill & Ted On Tour in America*, just like down and dirty. Now I'm not talking about Bill and Ted skinning people, dealing, and stealing. They'd still be what Alex calls them—dunderheads. If Alex wanted to do that, it'd be fun.

"Still, I'd like to get some time for myself. For the last year, I've been acting in films nonstop, so I haven't had much of a life. But I'm also afraid that if I take a break, a lot of good projects will pass me by.

"At this point in my career, I feel like I have a lot more responsibility. Four

BORN: 1965 in Beirut, Lebanon. OCCUPATION: Actor. SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY: 1985: **Dream to Believe** ■ 1987: **River's Edge** ■ 1988: **The Night Before**; **Permanent Record** ■ 1989: **Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure**; **Parenthood**; **Prince of Pennsylvania** ■ 1990: **I Love You to Death**; **Tune in Tomorrow** ■ 1991: **Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey**; **Point Break**; **My Private Idaho**. FUTURE PROJECTS: **Bram Stoker's Dracula**; **Madison Avenue Clowns**.

years ago, nobody asked me what I was trying to do—I was just acting. Now, I have to look at every script to see if it's something interesting.

"I've just finished Gus Van Sant's **My Private Idaho** with River Phoenix. It was shot in Portland, Oregon, and it's about the adventures of two street hustlers, but it's not simply a plot-driven narrative film, like a classic American movie. Working with Gus is *never* straight up.

"Basically, I want to act and direct—that's one of my fantasies. I want to work with passionate people and scripts that have something to say. I *don't* want to be stuck in some Hollywood product. At the very least, I want to be in films that *attempt* to be creative."

★ Eric Hiiliard

